



Wild School - Child Protection Policy

Updated: 15 January 2023

Child Protection Policy Goals:

- To set up, and maintain a safe environment for all children.
- To develop, implement and review teaching and management practices that ensure child safety is thoughtfully maintained.
- To provide teachers with information and training about factors that can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse.
- To provide teachers with information and training to assist them to identify signs of sexual, physical, emotional and mental abuse or neglect.
- To provide procedures based on Oranga Tamariki guidelines for dealing with suspected abuse.
- To nurture and support children that have been the victims of abuse, and provide appropriate assistance to their parents/caregivers.

Definitions of Abuse

Physical abuse – any acts that may result in the physical harm of a child or young person.

Physical abuse can be caused from, but is not limited to smacking, punching, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning or throwing the child. Physical abuse may also result from excessive or inappropriate discipline or violence within the family, and is considered abuse regardless of whether or not it was intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may be the result of a single episode or of a series of episodes.

Sexual abuse – any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse includes acts or behaviours where an adult, older or more powerful person uses a child for a sexual purpose. There are 2 different types of child sexual abuse. These are called contact abuse and non-contact abuse.

· Contact abuse - involves touching activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child, including penetration. It includes: sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child's wearing clothes or not; rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus; forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity; making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate.

· Non-contact abuse - involves non-touching activities, such as grooming, exploitation, persuading children to perform sexual acts over the internet and flashing. It includes: encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts; not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others; meeting a child following sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them; online abuse including making, viewing or distributing child abuse images; allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images; showing pornography to a child; sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child exploitation).

Emotional abuse – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:

- Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
- Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence.

Neglect – neglect is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:

- Physical (not providing the necessities of life, like a warm place, food and clothing).
- Emotional (not providing comfort, attention and love).
- Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).
- Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
- Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

Procedures:

Caregiving Practises

Permanently employed staff will solely be responsible for all required personal care routines for any child.

Parents will not be involved in caregiving routines except with their own children.

All visitors will be greeted by a staff member and be required to sign the Parent Helper/Visitor document before joining the group.

No visitor or parent will be allowed access to the group while under the influence of alcohol or substance that impairs their judgement or behavioural standards.

Guidelines outlining the appropriate contact with children in our care will be made available when visitors join our group. Appropriate touching guidelines include: holding hands (eg: walking on busy pathways, near streams, crossing areas with traffic, supporting children in physically demanding terrain), helping children on or off equipment, physical removal from potentially dangerous situations. Inappropriate touching for visitors includes: hugs, kisses, tickling, stroking, sitting child on knee, carrying children, changing children's clothes.

All details of care given by staff in respect to children's genital areas will be recorded with date, time and action taken, as soon as possible after the event. This includes: washing genitals (recorded on our Assisted Toileting Record), applying medication to genitals (Medicine Administration record), inspection of genital areas if soreness, itching or injury is suspected (Accident/Injury Register). If a staff member suspects an injury/abuse to a child's genital area a second staff member will act as a witness for any inspections carried out.

Staff will be familiar with and follow further practises outlined in the specific Health and Safety Policy documentation for the caregiving routines of the children, in regards to:

- *Toileting*
- *Sickness and Infectious Disease*

Professionalism

All staff will be interviewed and a thorough check of their work history carried out before final appointment is made.

As outlined in the requirements of the Children's Act 2014, all staff, permanent volunteers, students and parent helpers will need to provide documentation to support identity and receive a clear Police vetting report to be able to be involved with the care of children at WS. Police checks will be renewed at least every three years.

An agreement outlining the Code of Professional Conduct will be given to all staff outlining boundaries and expectations with regards to behaviour and work practices.

Staff interviews and conversations with parents will help to inform the identification of vulnerable children. An environment of support and openness to discuss parenting and family life will be promoted throughout our operations.

The *Child Protection Policy* will be revisited regularly at staff meetings to ensure familiarity with practices and adherence to guidelines.

Trustees and staff will review the *Child Protection Policy* as needed to ensure that practises remain congruent with government laws and regulations for the prevention of child abuse.

Education

Education for the children will focus on helping them to gain a healthy respect for their own and others' bodies, minds and spirit will be integrated into the programme planning.

Self-awareness concepts to empower the children to establish personal boundaries such as "My body is special to me" and "I can say no" will be encouraged.

Staff will be encouraged to seek training in factors influencing a child's vulnerability to abuse, the Laws and Regulations surrounding child safety, the signs and indicators of abuse and how to respond appropriately with disclosure or suspicions of abuse. (See: *Child Abuse Response Procedure*.)

Parenting courses and up-skilling opportunities offered by local agencies will be regularly promoted to help parents feel equipped with the challenges of parenting.

Staff Supervision

At all times the WS child to teacher ratios will be adhered to.

Regardless of child numbers, at least 2 adults will be present when children are present.

Visual access to staff members will be maintained, as able, when care routines such as toileting support or changing support is given. Good communication will be maintained with the team when needing to change or assist a child.

Staff and visitors will ensure they are not alone with a child in an enclosed space, in a vehicle, or in a secluded environment. (On the occasion where a staff member is requested to transport a child home after a session, that staff member will call/text the parent as they leave WS, so that there is accountability in the timing of transporting a child. Staff are

requested to avoid this situation if possible, but realises that sometimes urgent transport may be required. Staff must communicate with their team if the above situation unfolds.)

Safety for children will be paramount in the planning and execution of our programmes. All staff will adhere to the safety and risk assessment guidelines outlined in the *Health, Wellness and Safety Policy*.

Staff will take all practical steps to ensure that material brought into our programmes by children and families is of a nature consistent with the values of WS and in no way exposes the children to inappropriate sexual or violent references.

Parent / Whanau Involvement

Parents are welcome to visit and spend time with their children in our programmes. We actively encourage building a community of learners.

Parental and whanau participation in learning, experiences, and activities is encouraged.

Parental and whanau awareness of all Wild School policies including *Child Protection* and *Complaints Procedures* will be encouraged.

Any parent or whanau member under suspicion of child abuse will not be allowed access to our group whilst under investigation.

Suspicion of Child Abuse

Any person may report suspected neglect or abuse to the appropriate authorities.

A clear process for documenting and reporting suspicions of child abuse has been developed by WS. (See: Response to *Suspected Child Abuse Procedure*)

Support and referral to outside agencies, as appropriate, for children and families affected by child abuse, or staff involved in the reporting of child abuse, will be given.

If a case of child abuse is suspected/confirmed for a child on the WS role, and is under investigation, all steps will be taken by staff and management to maintain normal routines and professional practises to ensure all the other children and families are not unduly affected.